

MARKET PLACE AND THE BABY BOOMER
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The Future is Now! Customer Focus

Who is the customer? What do we know?

Seventy-eight (78) million Baby Boomers were born between 1946 and 1964.

Every day 10,000 of them turn 50 years old.

The Baby Boomer generation is demographically, ethnically diverse.

Today one out of every three adults in the U.S. is a Baby Boomer.

By 2010 older adults will out spend younger adults by 1 trillion dollars a year.

Boomers matter because we are told we matter and we believe it!
Boomers have special status because of their enormous numbers, and
"Because from the time we were born marketers reinforced a sense of generational distinctiveness by pitching so many things to us all the time that were only and specifically for us. The mass media insisted that we mattered. And once you are a market – especially a really big market – you can change history."
Steve Gillion, Boomer Nation

Howdy Doody, Mickey Mouse, Barbie, and the Mustang were our anthems!

The amount of money spent by marketers to advertise to the Boomers in just the first decade of our existence doubled from \$6 billion to \$12 billion

Existing Perceptions What did you call me? I am not "old"!

Before 1900 the average life expectancy of Americans was less than 50 years; a 40- year-old man was considered old. People thought of themselves and others as being little and then of being old, but the middle part was not articulated as a distinct age" according to Yale historian, John Demos.

Today that middle part of the aging continuum is where the Boomer resides – our forever 40s. We do not associate ourselves with any imagery connected to being old. Baby Boomers are not "seniors". Boomers reject all age-related labels that describe them.

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Today marketers are missing the boat with Baby Boomers because the focus is on the 18 to 49s or the over 65s and ignore us. Our choices are iPods, Viagra, or Depends.

Yet we control half of all the household discretionary income. We spend \$2 trillion annually on consumer goods and services, and by 2010 adults 45 and older will out spend younger adults by \$1trillion yearly.

As Boomers, our contribution as an American generation is that of the expansion of "individual freedom". We were the first generation to realize the American dream of equal opportunity for all its citizens. Boomers have transformed American Society and its institutions.

Boomers are not only highly educated but have actually caused to change the education institutions all the way through higher education as we have traveled through them like the great slithering, hungry snake devouring its meal whole. The Boomer snake is now at the door of the public social services system.

Implications to Public Policy – The Challenge

We are important to the marketplace, we are a huge part of the economic engine of the United States. The Boomers, 78 million and strong and far from getting old, are now the customer and client of the public social services programs we at this conference have pledged to serve! We are them and they are us!

Our current social service policy promotes the separation of funding streams for specific age groups AOA serves Older Adults, DOL serves Working Age Adults, HSS serves Children.

Baby Boomers do not fit neatly into the current public policy funding streams; Boomers are also the Sandwich Generation. We take care of our grandchildren, as the retirement plans of our parents have dwindled away and our saving accounts are just place holders we must continue to work and generate a pay check, and we must take care of aging parents who now are living longer thanks to the wonders of modern science.

Current Social Policy does not address the integrated continuum of services required by the U.S. Baby Boomer generation.

As I just described, Boomers believe their own press. We have a perception of ourselves as a generation that cuts across the economic strata. Boomers have a sense of self as a market whether we are making \$50,000 a year or \$250,000 a year.

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The current language labels in the public social service arena have a negative connotation to the Boomer – Mature Worker – Older Adult – or other common phrase like over the hill - retiree. Boomers do not associate themselves with this imagery connected with being old, according to Matt Thornhill, The Boomer Project.

Case in point - One of the premier drivers of social policy reform for Boomers is AARP. AARP mounted a marketing campaign to address the Boomer market share. It morphed from American Association of Retired Persons to AARP forever banishing the Older American label. The face of AARP is now Richard Gere, Billy Crystal, Kathy Bates.

The Baby Boomer is not going accept the status quo. We know that we drive the economic and social engines of the U.S. Remember, we know we are important because television advertising have told us so since the 1950s, and we know that there are a lot of us so you need to pay attention. We are also market savvy. We are not going to accept the public social services in the silos that are offered currently. We will demand a better market package of services – wrapped to go please! We will demand integrated services for all our needs from our politicians and government. And, we will require to be addressed (labeled) with the respect we deserve – Boomer please!

So considering all this, what needs to change in social service policy?
How do we address the integrated continuum of services required by the Baby Boomer Nation?
How do we reinvent and reconfigure public services at the local level to meet the demands of the Baby Boomers?
I have some ideas, but don't have any articulated answers yet. However, part of today's conference is the to take on the challenge!

We are them and they are us – the Boomers. We are working, aging, and care giving cross-generationally all at the same time. It is not one or the other for us – work then retire like our parents, we must do it all.

We who drive and deal in creating and implementing public policy must re-invent ourselves – reinvent and reconfigure public social services to address the integrated continuum of services that will be demanded by the demographically diverse Baby Boomer generation.

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We must look at the reinvention and reconfiguration for our City and County families – the primary example that comes to mind is the integration of the various Aging and Workforce Development services for the Boomer.

The Workforce one-stop centers and the Aging senior centers will need to converge and integrate to address the Boomer needs in the packaged advertising way to which we are accustomed. The new package of services in a one-stop format will need to have the internet, work opportunities, computer literacy training, family care giving, legal services, in-home care, nutrition, preventive health services, oh! And Starbucks Coffee, please!

– I am a Baby Boomer - I am both aging and working not one or the other – and so are 78 million of us across the nation.

I call upon you today to accept the challenge!